

NEWS & VIEWS

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government, which is the Nixon orchestration.

Conspiracy, Conspiracy

Chicago Daily News columnist L. P. Palmer, Jr., explains further the negative mood of blacks on Apollo 11 and the moon business: most TV and press eulogies to astronauts killed in the space program omitted mention of Robert H. Lawrence.

Major Lawrence, only U.S. black astronaut, died in a plane crash at Edwards Air Force Base in December, 1967. According to Palmer (7/26/69), "many blacks believe with a passion that astronaut Lawrence . . . was deliberately killed to keep a black man from achieving the high honor of being one of the nation's first spacemen." Culprit: the CIA.

Palmer doesn't espouse the conspiracy theory—not quite, at least. "What is enormously significant," he allows, "is that there are black Americans so alienated from their government that they can harbor such ghastly thoughts."

William Worthy is less indirect in writing in the *Boston Globe* (7/13/69) on another racially sensitive topic. He sees a national conspiracy

aimed at black revolutionaries.

Worthy, who holds it was CIA bullets which cut down Malcolm X, builds his case

on a score of incidents beginning with last autumn's blackjacking of Black Panthers by off-duty policemen in a Brooklyn court corridor.

"The systematic police and FBI crackdown is relentless," Worthy remarks, "usually unflamboyant, [and] centrally computerized from Washington."

Worthy may be overstating his theory, but conspiracy or not, the law's war on black militants is a hot one. You just don't read a whole lot about it. And when it does make print, you have trouble finding the story. The *New York Times*' piece on the police's shooting up of Panther offices in Chicago July 31 was tucked at the bottom of page 67 in a 68-page issue.

Going Over to the Cong

The *New York Times*' piece about the "many United States soldiers in South Vietnam who lack an ideological commitment to the war" (8/4/69) was tame stuff alongside the *London Express* report of a U.S. offen-

sive against U.S. deserters to the Viet Cong.

According to a *London Express* press service story (6/28/69), "crack Green

Beret troops are [being] used to track [deserters] down."

Their orders: "kill the turncoats if it is impossible to capture them alive."

The *Express* added sardonically: "so far there have been no reports of a court martial for any Americans who joined the Viet Cong."

Many of the deserters are said to be Negroes, who, in the *Express*' words, "let it be known they are deserting as a gesture in support of the militant black movement in the U.S."

Electoral Reform?

The electoral reform bill, which would provide for direct election of the President and Vice President, is moving at last toward the floor.

The bill (HJ Res 681, SJ Res 1) sailed through the Judiciary Committee in April, was cleared by the Rules Committee in mid-July, and will likely be read for floor action after the summer recess.

But the bill's fortunes are far more dubious now than they were a few months ago, when the Wallace experience was still fresh in the psyche.

More and more folks like Congressmen Phillip Burton and Don Edwards, Democrats of California, are coming around to the Alexander Bickel position that the electoral college favors urban areas and that it's potentially dangerous to jettison the electoral college altogether.

One growing school of thought would retain the electoral college concept but eliminate the electors themselves. This would enable the automatic casting of a state's electoral votes and eliminate the hazard of errant electors looking for power brokers in the House of Representatives—a high-risk possibility, obviously, as politically the country moves right and

The Toll on Teddy

When the summing up is done, the great tragedy of Ted Kennedy's Cape Cod caper, after that of the death of Mary Jo Kopechne, is not the elimination of Kennedy, the presidential candidate for '72, but the neutralization of Kennedy the senator in '69.

Deserving or not, Kennedy commanded on senatorial matters an authority that was unique. No one of either party approached it—not Dirksen, not McGovern, not Fulbright, not Mansfield, not Muskie. No one.

The proof was in the Hamburger Hill speech. Unquestionably it was instrumental in turning around U.S. battlefield strategy in Vietnam.

If any other senator had delivered that same speech, the effect would have been nowhere comparable. Media coverage, some flurries of reaction, then forget it. U.S. troops would possibly still be about those insane search-and-destroy missions that kept U.S. deaths above 200 a week.

Well, it's a new ball game now. Kennedy will speak on issues as in the past, but his voice will be one among 100 in the upper chamber. The political prestige which was his inheritance and which gave automatic weight to any preference, any utterance of his is gone—at least for the foreseeable future.

Perhaps this is as it should be. Perhaps it is a dangerous thing to have too much leverage invested in one man outside the executive branch.

But, remember, Richard Nixon is President. And if that doesn't sober one on the urgency of a truly powerful influence among the loyal opposition, then one's due is the waltz-time rendition of

